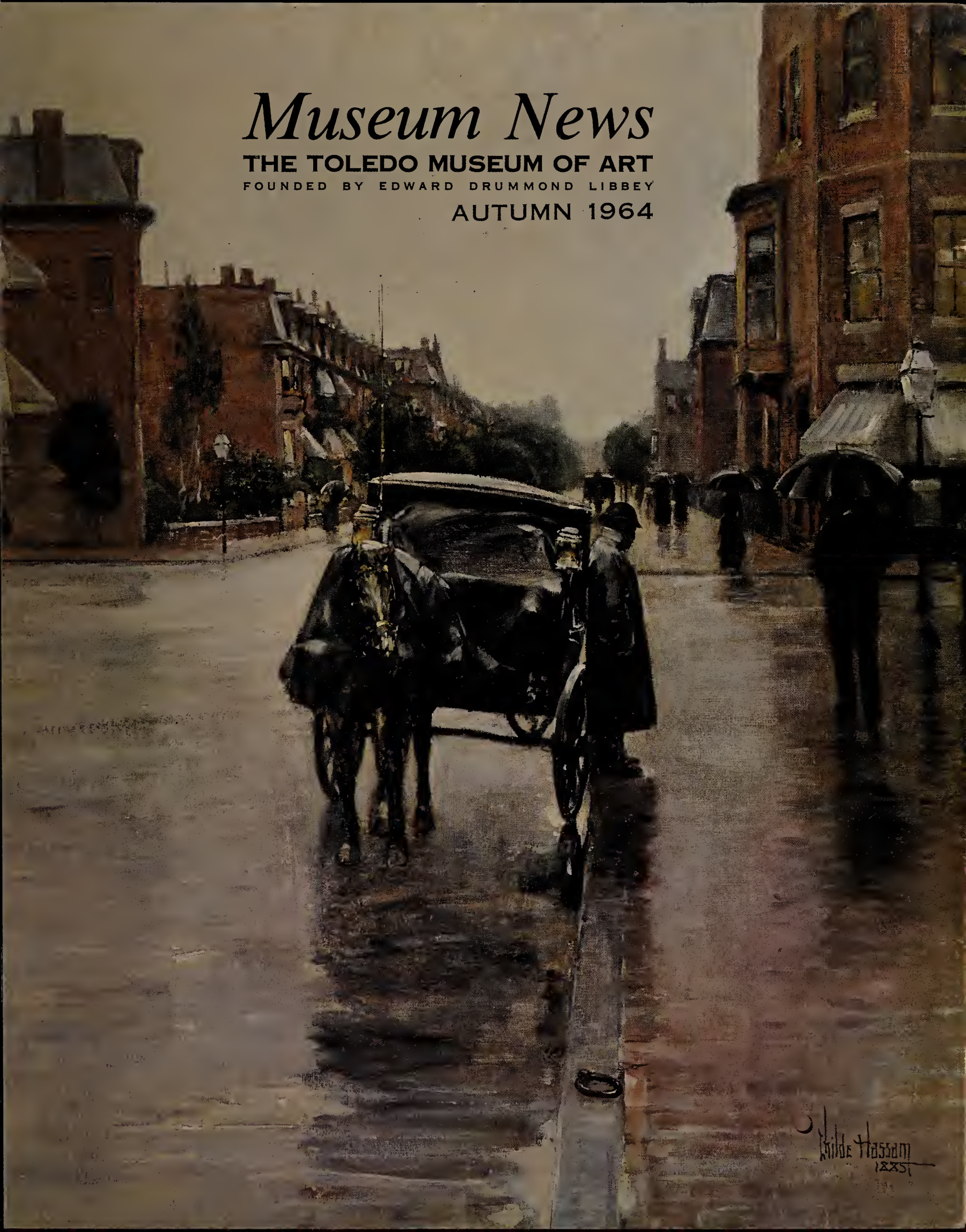
Museum News

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

AUTUMN 1964



ART AND AMERICAN LIFE

To glance through the illustrations on the following pages is to see how Americans lived and looked from the Civil War to the present. Here are homely scenes of the backyard hammock, the excitement of Broadway, the elegance of Back Bay Boston, distinguished and wealthy persons, scenes of everyday life, all made magically intense through the skillful painting of some of America's best artists.

America was growing wealthy and powerful during this period of 100 years, but often the best artists received little recognition or reward. Many fled to Europe, a few became expatriates, but most continued to paint the American scenes they knew best.

The art of our own country has always played an important part in the collections of this Museum, as it should.

This issue is devoted to figure painting (portraits and anecdotal pictures) of the last hundred years. An earlier issue (Autumn, 1959) described American Painting from 1730 to 1860. A future issue will illustrate and discuss American landscape painting of the last century.

Otto Wittmann, Director

Museum News

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

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AUTUMN 1964 *New Series: Volume 7, Number 3*

EDITOR: Otto Wittmann

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Millard F. Rogers, Jr.

COVER: CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935). *Rainy Day, Boston* (Detail). Oil on canvas. 26¼ x 48¼ inches. Signed and dated lower right: *Childe Hassam 1885*. Ex-coll.: Woodard, Boston. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 56.53.

RECEIVED SEP 2 1 1964 CAP

WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT (1824-1879). Francisca Paim da Terra Brum da Silveira. Oil on canvas. 40½ x 30 inches. Signed and dated lower right: W. M. Hunt Pinxit/1858. Ex-colls: Terra Brum family, Horta, Azores; Vasconcelos family, Lisbon. Museum Purchase 59.19.

AMERICANS AT HOME AND FARAWAY

The epoch spanned by five American paintings in The Toledo Museum of Art, executed between 1858 and 1888, saw a young republic pass through the tragic years of the Civil War, industrialization, and the conquest of the West to become a great nation. Unfortunately, young artists in those years found "a forlorn absence of public galleries and collections" in the United States where they could study good pictures. Seeing little that attracted them in the provincial romanticism of the established Hudson River School, most younger artists of the early second-half of the century fled to Europe for study and travel.

In 1855, William Morris Hunt (1824-1879) returned to Boston after many years of study and painting in Europe, where he was the pupil and friend of Couture and Millet and knew the landscape painters of the Barbizon School. Portrait painter to fashionable society in Boston and Newport, he was in a strategic position from which to impress his enthusiasm for Barbizon painting upon the taste of cultivated Americans.

While spending the winter of 1857-1858 with friends in the Portuguese-owned Azores Islands, Hunt painted the *Portrait of Francisca Paim da Terra Brum da Silveira*, an aged noblewoman. He set the reserved figure of Lady Paim, clad in the garments of widowhood, against an austere background relieved only by her coat-of-arms emblazoned in gold and colors. It has been suggested that the reticence of this conception reveals Hunt's admiration of the subdued yet rich portraits of the 17th century Spanish master, Velásquez. The portrait remained in the sitter's family in the Azores and Lisbon until recently, when it was brought to America by one of her descendants.

Hunt's unusual perception of character, as shown here, endowed his portraits with a definite sense of personality. Their strength results from the way he simplified masses and eliminated unnecessary accessories. Hunt must certainly be counted as one of America's important portrait painters.

The Maine-born artist, Eastman Johnson (1824-1906), enjoyed considerable success in his own day. Studying first in Düsseldorf, he then spent several years in the Netherlands. When he returned home in 1855, Johnson transported the Dutch interior scene of the 17th century to this side of the Atlantic and gave it an American homespun quality. *Corn Shelling*, painted in 1864, shows the influence of his years in Holland in its richly modulated color and in the contrast of boldly worked lights against transparent brown shadows. Johnson's own gift was the ability to reveal in one small segment of human experience its animating force, which strikes the viewer with greater impact than would the actual scene itself. The best of Johnson's work, as this picture attests, lies in the American tradition of honest observation. By now we can safely classify him as one of America's old masters.

George Henry Boughton (1833-1905), born in England, passed his early life and young manhood in America. He worked as an artist for nine years in New York before going to Paris to study under the painter, Edouard Frère. After leaving Paris he spent the rest of his life in London.

Several of Boughton's best known pictures were inspired by events in New England's colonial history. In *Puritans Going to Church*, painted in 1867, Boughton invents a picture of life in America two centuries before he painted. The Puritans, each with a Bible and all but the minister armed with guns, tramp to church with their wives and children through a snow-covered landscape. The quiet vigilance of the group in the face of unseen danger reveals dramatically the indomitable spirit of the first settlers.

Our picture, acquired from a private English collection where it presumably had been since it was painted, is Boughton's first version of the familiar

EASTMAN JOHNSON (1824-1906). Corn Shelling. Oil on academy board. 15 x 12 inches. Signed lower left: E. Johnson 64. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 24.35.

Puritan scene that has become a favorite subject for American history textbooks. A second and larger picture, with minor variations, is owned by the New York Public Library. Fewer details and the smaller size are two factors which lead scholars to believe Toledo's version was painted first as a study.

Winslow Homer (1836-1910) was primarily a self-taught artist who moved with rapid success through the then important field of magazine illustration to become a serious and independent painter and finally one of America's greatest artists. Painting outdoors much of the time, he developed a highly personal impressionistic style independently of the French Impressionists. Years of illustrating that included reporting the Civil War already had taught him the knack of quickly seizing and recording the essentials of form and movement.

America out-of-doors was Homer's theme and the seashore always a favorite subject. This interest is also seen in his important oil, *Sunlight on the Coast*, in our collection. The summer of 1880 Homer spent on Ten Pound Island in the middle of Gloucester Harbor, staying with the lighthouse keeper and his wife. *Boys Beaching a Dory* is typical of the subjects he found around him. His absorbing interest was in catching the momentary effects of light in sky and water. Here the luminosity filters through gray clouds, softening the forms of rocks and sails and creating the impression of a particular kind of day. Homer's keen perception and swift execution found in watercolor the perfect medium for capturing in paint the subtleties of light and atmosphere.

GEORGE HENRY BOUGHTON (1833-1905). Puritans Going to Church. Oil on canvas. 14⅛ x 25⅛ inches. Signed lower right: G. H. B. Ex-colls: Bennett, London; Capt. G. Crutchley, London. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 57.30.

Born in New England and reared in Wisconsin, Theodore Robinson (1852-1896) studied art briefly in Chicago and New York before going to Paris in 1876. There he studied in the academic tradition under Carolus-Duran and Gérome. Later, under the influence of French Impressionism, Robinson reached artistic maturity. He spent many years of his short life in France and was a friend of Claude Monet.

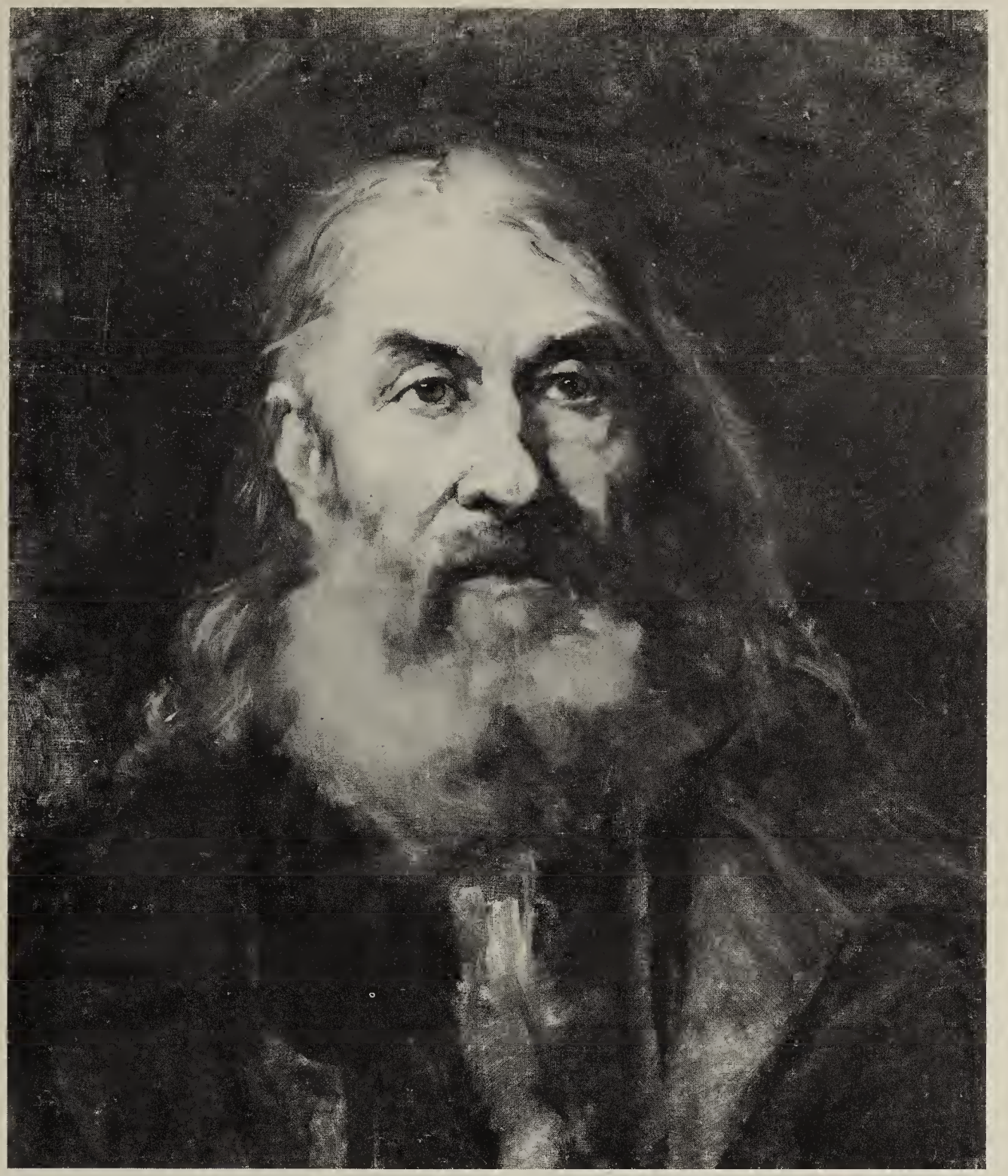
Girl at Piano, undated as well as unfinished, bears only the inscription, *To my friend Louis Ritter—Th. Robinson.* It was probably painted about 1887-1888. This was about the time Robinson's friendship with Monet began, yet the picture is only impressionistic in its capture of one fleeting, lyrical moment as the girl glances up while playing. Otherwise, the technique is the traditional one that begins by modeling form solidly in a dark, monochromatic underpainting. *Girl at Piano* embodies a sincerity and directness, or what Robinson would have called "frankness," that makes it very appealing. It also demonstrates the depth of his tender and poetic vision.

The lives of these five artists typify the changing experience of the American artist during the three decades considered here. When the period began the artist was a thriving citizen; when it ended he was almost impoverished. The camera stripped him first of portraiture and later of magazine illustration. He went to Europe to study an art he could not learn at home, and upon returning found America interested chiefly in European painters. In spite of these difficulties, the five artists discussed each survived in his own way and made a significant contribution to American painting.

Selden Washington

WINSLOW HOMER (1836-1910). Boys Beaching a Dory. Watercolor on paper. 9½ x 13½ inches. Signed lower left: Homer 1880. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 50.274.

THEODORE ROBINSON (1852-1896). Girl at Piano. Oil on canvas. 20 x 15 inches. Signed and inscribed upper right: To my friend Louis Ritter/Th. Robinson. Ex-colls: Louis Ritter; Vincent Bowditch, Boston; Mr. and Mrs. H. I. Bowditch; Harvey F. Addison; Donald B. Willson. Museum Purchase. 50.297.



FRANK DUVENECK (1848-1919). Head of an Old Man. Oil on canvas. 22 x18 inches. Ex-coll: George W. Pierpont. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 23.19.

AMERICANS IN PARIS AND MUNICH, 1880-1900

After the Civil War many Americans left the America of the Mugwumps, Boss Tweed of Tammany Hall, Carnegie, and the "sky of brass and iron" for the European world of culture and sophistication. Critical of America, the artist James McNeill Whistler and the novelist Henry James never returned. At the same time artists such as Duveneck, Chase, Hassam, Thayer and Eakins sought Europe for its superior art training, its museums, and its older civilization. Later, each returned to contribute as artists and teachers.

Frank Duveneck (1848-1919) and William Merritt Chase, the two Midwesterners of the post Civil War group, met as students at Munich's Royal Academy. American art training was inadequate, but in Munich they studied fundamental drawing from Greek and Roman sculpture, life drawing, and painting. Prior to the burst of French Impressionism, the Munich Academy of the '70s venerated both the earlier French art trends and the technique, subject matter, and dark palette of the Dutch schools of Rembrandt and Hals readily seen at the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.

Duveneck left Cincinnati and church decorating to study in Munich. It is in the *Head of an Old Man* that Duveneck shows his excellence as a portrait painter. While Sargent painted the socially prominent on commission, Duveneck portrayed his friends, his professors, or just an interesting model from the street. During his student days he often shared both studio and model with Chase. His unknown model for the *Head of an Old Man* was painted about 1883, possibly in Florence.

While other artists turned to color and light problems in the late 19th century, Duveneck restricted himself to the rendering of a model's character with quick strokes, solidity, and a low-key palette of reds, browns, and blacks reminiscent of the Dutch. Duveneck brings out the man's weathered expression by eliminating detail and merely suggesting the torso. Typical of Duveneck is the incisive portrait drawn almost immediately in oil directly on the canvas and often completed in several sittings. Duveneck remained in Europe teaching and traveling until his wife, Elizabeth, died in Florence in 1888. Duveneck thereupon returned to teach and paint in Cincinnati.

"My God, I'd rather go to Europe than go to Heaven," said William Merritt Chase (1849-1916). The Indiana-born Chase joined Duveneck at Munich's Royal Academy about 1872. During the '80s Chase traveled and had a brief acquaintance with Whistler, who introduced him to Japanese art. While some Americans saw the Paris of Gérome during the '70s, Chase saw the Impressionists of the '80s.

The Museum's *Open Air Breakfast* was painted about 1888, shortly after he returned from Europe. It retains the facile hand of the Munich-trained Chase, but incorporates the considerably lighter palette of pinks, yellows, and greens of Paris. A combination of all these elements catch in rapidly applied small strokes Chase's young wife and first child at the table, and, most likely, his various sisters-in-law, one in the hammock and the other at the right in a typical Whistlerian pose. The tropical plant and rare greyhound to the left were a part of the exotic collection of objects which filled his studio on Fifth Avenue, New York.

While Eakins would make actual portraits of each figure, Chase set his family in the background incorporating them into the whole sunlit scene. In his day he was well-known not only as a painter but as a teacher at the New York Art Student's League, the Pennsylvania Academy with Eakins, and at his Long Island summer school.

CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935). Rainy Day, Boston. Oil on canvas. 26¼ x 48¼ inches. Signed and dated lower right: Childe Hassam/1885. Ex-coll: Woodard, Boston. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 56.53.

The painter of New England, Frederick Childe Hassam (1859-1935), went from his native Dorchester, Massachusetts, to Boston as an illustrator, then later became a lithographer and painter of portraits and landscapes. About ten years after Eakins and Thayer studied in Paris under Gérome, Hassam arrived in 1886 to work in Julian's studio. Impressionism and Monet had taken over the Paris art world. Later he returned to America to paint the colors and atmosphere of New York and other parts of the country as well as indoor scenes.

Rainy Day, Boston, is an important early work painted in 1885 while the artist was living in Boston and before he became acquainted with Impressionism. Some tend to dismiss Hassam as merely an American Impressionist but this painting clearly shows his early and original interest in the problems of atmosphere, light, and color. One can almost feel the gray wetness of the warm, gentle rain. Here Hassam caught the dignity and pace of the carriage age moving past pink stone buildings with mansard roofs of the Columbus Avenue residential area.

Abbott Handerson Thayer (1849-1921) left America as a painter of animals and returned from the École des Beaux-Arts and Gérome in Paris as a painter of classical womanhood. As a child growing up in New Hampshire, his bible was Audubon's *Birds of America.* Like Eakins, Thayer was interested in science as well as art throughout his career. Thayer's theories on camouflage and the concealing coloration in the animal kingdom have contributed both to science and modern warfare.

WILLIAM MERRITT CHASE (1849-1916). Open Air Breakfast. Oil on canvas. 37½ x 56¾ inches. Signed lower left: Wm. M. Chase. Ex-coll: J. A. Hoffman, Charleston, S. C. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 53.136.

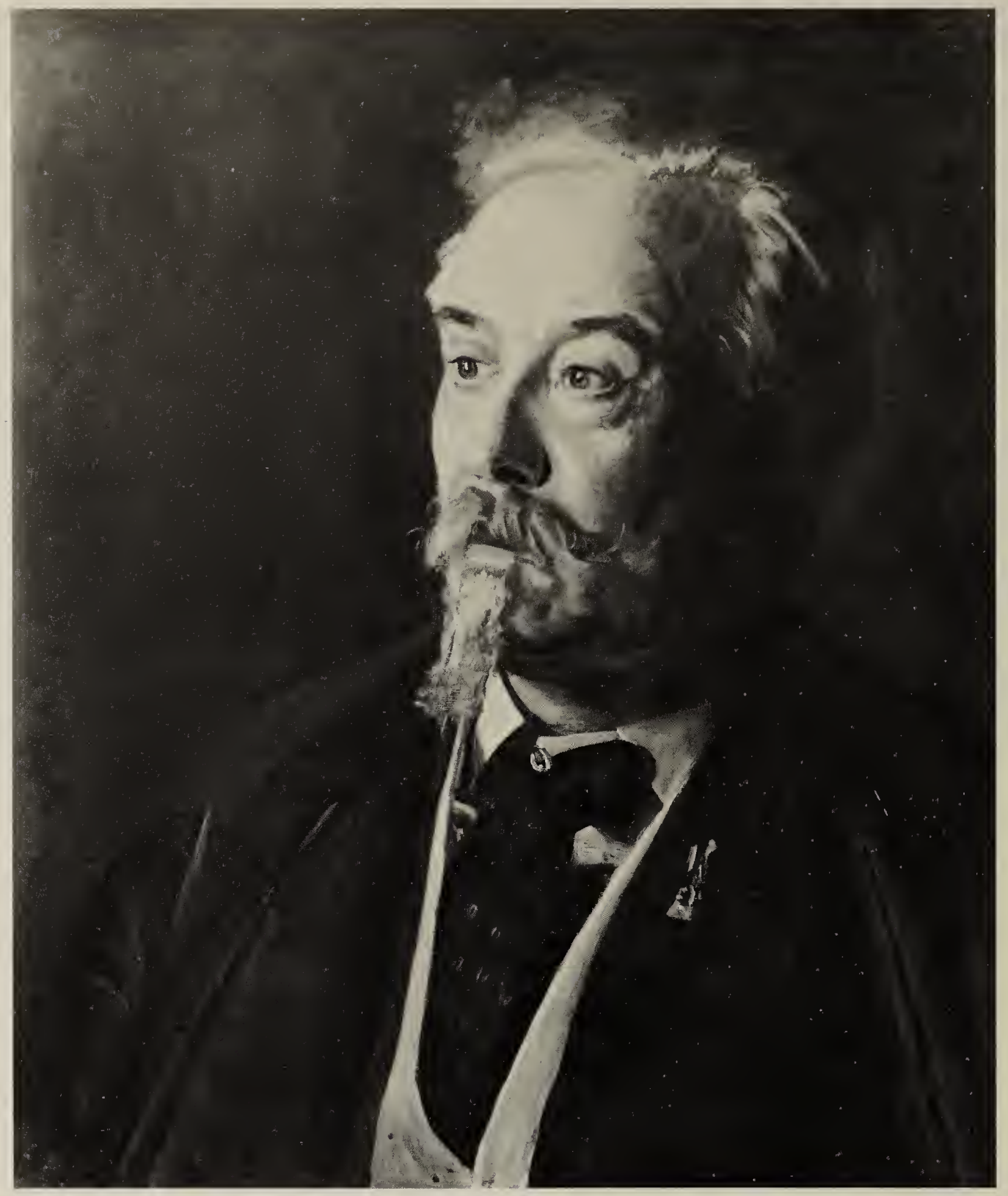
After schooling in Boston, Brooklyn, and the National Academy in New York, the quiet animal painter went to Paris in 1875. There Thayer turned to painting the human figure, and, upon his return, particularly to commissioned portraits of women and children. These portraits were not the character studies of Duveneck or Eakins but idealized visions of womanhood, each suggesting softness, innocence, and madonna-like grace. His renowned *Virgin Enthroned* was sold to the noted Bostonian, J. Montgomery Sears, in September, 1891, for $8,000.

In the fall of 1891, Sears commissioned the portrait of his young daughter, Helen, owned by the Museum. By January, 1892, Thayer was finishing the child's dress in his New York studio. The drapery typical of most Thayer portraits is a virtuoso display of whites, thickly applied, giving solidity to the short, chubby child against a background of flowers and a blue wall.

Although the Philadelphian Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) studied at the École des Beaux-Arts under Gérome as did Abbott Thayer, his course as man of science, expert on anatomy, painter, and teacher was radically different. For American art after the Civil War, he made a significant contribution. His then revolutionary demand for the nude model as a basic prelude to drawing the human figure is now commonly accepted, but it shocked Victorian Philadelphia and resulted in his resignation from the Pennsylvania Academy.

ABBOTT H. THAYER (1849-1921). Helen Sears. Oil on canvas. 53½ x 38 inches. Signed lower right: Abbott H. Thayer. Ex-colls: J. Montgomery Sears; Mrs. Cameron Bradley (Helen Sears). Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 58.26.

To Luks, Bellows, and others, Eakins left a legacy of new subject matter: boxers, oarsmen, or a medical operation. His portraits, often rejected because of their unsympathetic revelation of character, were of professional people rather that the socially prominent.



THOMAS EAKINS (1844-1916). Bernardus J. Blommers. Oil on canvas. 23½ x 19¾ inches. Ex-coll: Charles P. Gruppe, New York. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 37.16.

The Museum's portrait, inscribed on the reverse, *To my friend: B. J. Blommers, 1904 by Thomas Eakins*, is of Bernardus Johannes Blommers (1845-1914) once a well-known Dutch painter of landscape, marines, and genre. Eakins painted both the artist and his wife in Philadelphia during their visit with the collector, E. Taylor Snow. Liquid, reflective eyes peer out from the strong, highlighted head set on a solidly constructed, heavy torso. A gold stick pin and red, white, and blue ribbon are typical touches of brightness in the otherwise low-key painting.

Gill Wright Bentley

GEORGE LUKS (1867-1933). The Little Milliner. Oil on canvas. 36½ x 36½ inches. Signed lower left and right: George Luks. Ex-coll: Arthur F. Egner, South Orange, N. J. Museum Purchase. 46.17.

1900: THE AMERICAN SCENE

Early in the 20th century a new awareness was growing in American art. Young painters who were conscious of European tradition began to transgress accepted standards of romantic and ideal scenes. They shocked the discreet academicians and general public alike with paintings showing the stark reality of everyday life, not quaint rural scenes of the nostalgic past.

George Luks (1867-1933) painted the *Little Milliner* in 1905 when he was thirty-eight. Theodore Roosevelt had just been re-elected. Work was starting on the Panama Canal, and the man on the street was whistling *Wait 'Til the Sun Shines, Nellie.* George Luks was producing his best work: impulsive, direct,

and unsophisticated. When Luks bragged to his friends, he had a tendency to forget his Victorian childhood. His father had been a doctor and an amateur artist, and his mother also painted. He, however, created a more colorful past for himself, something he considered more American, more dynamic and vigorous. He boasted of his dubious pugilistic career as "Chicago Whitey," the "Harlem Spider," and "Lusty Luks." Certainly he was a lusty painter. He captured the *Little Milliner* with all the bravado of the Dutch artist, Frans Hals, a man he greatly admired. There is a general darkness and spotlighting effect often associated with Dutch art. This young girl has a look and the inner mystery associated with the *Mona Lisa*, yet she is American, alive, caught in a moment as she goes about her daily routine. Luks made no attempt at a classical finish or presentation. He was after the new American spirit.

John Sloan (1871-1951) had also been raised in Philadelphia. He was a successful newspaper artist. He had studied in Europe, but he was thoroughly trained as a visual reporter capable of putting all the facts before him into a picture. He arrived in New York to start a serious career as a painter just the year before his friend Luks finished his painting of the young girl. *Moving Picture Theatre* was painted in 1913, the year of the great Armory Show. It is another spontaneous statement broadly painted, colorful yet seen through a reporter's eyes. Sloan was politically and socially aware, although he never attempted to moralize. He knew the works of Daumier and Toulouse-Lautrec, who possessed similar affinities for the man on the street.

Sloan and Luks, both originally Philadelphians, had an interest in everything typically American. They had felt the influence of that other Philadelphian, Thomas Eakins. Their new style was as unrefined as their subjects, and soon they and their friends were being called "Ash Can" artists.

Another Philadelphian, Cecilia Beaux (1863-1942) was far removed from the raw vigor of the Ash Can world of Sloan and Luks. She commanded high prices for her portraits and received many academic honors. Her position as an instructor at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts gave her a pronounced consciousness of the organization of painting. *After the Meeting* was painted in January, 1914. The unusual over-the-shoulder angle gives a feeling of not being composed, although the picture is highly ordered. Actually this is a portrait of Dorothea Gilder (Mrs. Dallas McGrew), one of six different poses painted by Miss Beaux. She considered each portrait a new challenge. She had no set formula by which she could produce her work. Such an attitude instilled more freshness into her work and removed the frozen artificial nature which is often the mark of a lesser artist.

Miss Beaux's directness and visual awareness can be seen when compared to the more poetic John Carroll (1892-1959). He painted *White Lace* in 1935 as he was just coming to public notice. His young girl is a wispy delicate female lost in her own reverie. She seems to float in space. Carroll's calligraphic touch creates a painterly shorthand which can deftly describe lace, hair or fabric lost in a soft, graceful glow. Carroll was a successful artist and teacher with a devoted following of students across the country. He was a typical American,

MAURICE PRENDERGAST (1859-1924). The Flying Horses. Oil on canvas. 23⅞ x 32⅛ inches. Signed lower right: Prendergast. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 57.22.

CECILIA BEAUX (1863-1942). After the Meeting. Oil on canvas. 40 x 28 inches. Signed lower left: Cecilia Beaux. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 15.163.

JOHN SLOAN (1871-1951). Moving Picture Theatre. Oil on canvas. 20 x 24 inches. Signed lower right: John Sloan. Museum Purchase. 40.16.

independent and constantly on the move: Kansas-born, schooled in California, with teaching positions in many places.

Another friend of Sloan and Luks was the quiet Maurice Prendergast (1859-1924). Prendergast had a style radically different from Ash Can realism. His *Flying Horses* is naively poetic yet clearly modern. The subtle coloring and sketchy brushwork combines into a tapestry-like panorama. Prendergast, the Bostonian, had been living modestly, framing pictures and making showcards with his brother, who was his close companion. From his European contacts, including his friend Paul Cézanne, he had developed his own impressionistic brush strokes laid on like odd-sized mosaic fragments, decorative and moving but combined with a delicate sense of color harmonies. It took the 1913 Armory Show to bring Prendergast to the attention of the American public. He was not a young rebel. He had finished *Flying Horses* between 1906-12 when he was turning fifty. He was the first American artist to comprehend modern principles of handling oil paints with emphasis on organization and the language of art. It is, therefore, not surprising that he became one of the group of artists sponsoring "The International Exposition of Modern Art" in 1913 at the Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory in New York City. What a shock it must have been. For the first time the American public saw the new trends in painting which had long excited many American artists. The general shock and subsequent publicity gave more attention to experimental approaches than ever before. A new freedom of expression was permanently established in the American tradition.

EDWARD HOPPER (1882-). Two on the Aisle. Oil on canvas. 40¼ x 48¼ inches. Signed lower right: Edward Hopper. Ex-colls: Carl W. Hamilton, New York; Henry C. Bentley, Boston. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 35.49.

JOHN CARROLL (1892-1959). White Lace. Oil on canvas. 40¼ x 30 inches. Signed lower right: John Carroll 35. Museum Purchase. 36.71.

The 1913 Armory Show included work by some artists who were independent from Ash Can realism or European influences. One such man was Edward Hopper (1882-). Hopper examined many styles. He had some Impressionist tendencies in his early scenes painted in Paris. By the time he was twenty-eight he had been to Europe three times. He also had contact with the Ash Can School. His *Two On The Aisle* shows another side of the city, the quiet of a lonely moment. He was not interested in the hustle and bustle outside the theatre or even the excitement of the performance itself. Instead he isolated a candid view of that routine moment before curtain time. Distracting details are omitted. He picked out the simplified geometry of architecture in which the humans present seem almost incidental. Hopper was thus able to elevate his views of the city to a monumental scale by his clarity and emphasis.

In New York, a second generation realist, Reginald Marsh (1898-1954) continued the American genre tradition. He liked to compare himself with the 18th century English moralist, William Hogarth. Since both of Marsh's parents were artists, he had learned to draw at an early age. After graduating from Yale in 1920 he further developed his commentator's eye through his experiences as a stage designer, cartoonist, and magazine illustrator. At night he studied with John Sloan and George Luks. Eventually he went to Europe to sketch the great masters. His realistic approach was often tempered with social undertones, undoubtedly due to his friends on New York's Fourteenth Street and the scenes he saw at Union Square. *Pursuit* was painted during 1941-42 as

REGINALD MARSH (1898-1954). Pursuit. Oil on masonite. 34⅛ x 24⅛ inches. Signed lower right: Reginald Marsh 1941-2. Gift of Elizabeth C. Mau. 43.62.

the Second World War raged. Life goes on in spite of everything, and young boys and pretty girls can still frolic on a carousel.

American painting of the everyday event received a new vitality after 1900. Artists looked at their own world honestly. They reported the facts without sentiment. They also found that such paintings could still be works of art composed to give even greater strength, arranged to heighten their feelings for the man on the street.

Charles F. Gunther

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